



St Andrew's Church, Reading Street

August 2026

Pastoral letter

Dear Friends,

As we arrive in August, many of us look forward to a slightly slower pace of life. Schools have broken up, families are taking holidays, and for many there is a welcome opportunity to rest and spend time with those we love.

I hope that, whether you are travelling abroad, exploring somewhere closer to home, or simply enjoying the comfort of your own garden, this month will be one of refreshment and peace.

At the same time, I know that not everyone will be going away. For some, August will be much the same as every other month, and for others it may bring loneliness, illness or financial pressures. Please remember that you are not forgotten. As your church family, we continue to hold one another in prayer, knowing that God's love reaches each one of us wherever we are.

Summer also gives us a wonderful opportunity to slow down and spend time with the Lord. Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to pray, and he invites us to do the same. Whether you are walking along the beach, sitting in the countryside, relaxing in your garden or enjoying a morning cup of tea, take a few moments each day to pause, thank God for his goodness, read a few verses of Scripture and speak to him in prayer.

We do not need a church building to meet with God. He is with us wherever we are. Every beautiful sunrise, every walk in creation and every quiet moment can remind us of his faithful presence. As the Psalmist writes, *"Be still, and know that I am God."* (Psalm 46:10)

As a church, we also continue to pray for all our children, young people, teachers and school staff during the summer holidays. We pray that this will be a time of rest, renewal and joy, and that the Lord will prepare them well for the new school year.

May this August be a month in which you experience God's peace, his protection and his presence in fresh ways. Whatever lies ahead, remember that the Lord walks beside you, and his love never fails.

May God bless you and those you love.

Philip

Open Gardens

The morning of 4th July dawned bright and warm, the temperature just right for walking around Reading Street looking at the participating gardens in our annual garden fest –

Open Gardens.

Master-minded by Linda Owen, Reading Street residents and friends did what it does so well – coming together to provide a day to remember. There were, apart from the gardeners and their helpers, ticket sellers, stewards, raffle and tombola operators and the catering gang.

Twelve residents, in and around Reading Street, opened their gardens and Taddy's Allotments were also open for inspection. Every garden was a brilliant example of what green fingers and dedication can be done regardless of the size of the space you have and the reason for developing the garden in the way it has been done. The allotments, a quintessential part of British life, provided a peek into what can be done with a small plot of land to provide fresh fruit and vegetables.

A huge thank you to all of the gardeners and allotment holders who so generously allowed us into their green spaces to enjoy flowers, shrubs, trees, produce, ponds, sitting areas and hedgehogs!

Knitted flower garlands and bunting made the village a real celebration of the community and reflected the joy with which the visitors walked around. Thank you to all those who created these and adorned post box, fences, seats and gates.

Plant and garden paraphernalia were on sale thanks to Linda and her gardening friends. Geoffrey Philpott, of Elmwood Farm, provided fruit and vegetables for sale, and we thank him for his continued support of St Andrew's.

St Andrew's Church is at the centre of the Open Gardens, physically, financially, socially and spiritually. Physically: seven gardens and the allotments were on the north of the church and five gardens were to the south. Financially: the Open Gardens is to raise much needed funds to maintain St Andrew's. We are very lucky to have such a beautiful church with its own vicar in Reading Street. It is nestled in the heart of the village both physically and metaphorically and the village would be a lesser place were we to lose it. Socially: with the church and its newly refurbished hall and kitchen providing spaces for community events and activities, as well as the church doing what churches do – looking after the spiritual well-being of its congregation and the wider community.

In the community hall, Pauline and her fantastic team, toiled all day (and the previous day in preparation) serving lunches of freshly made rolls, desserts and cakes, tea, coffee and squash. All of their hard work made a profit of £2,419 on the day.

The total raised from ticket sales (£3,593), catering, plant and produce sales (£1,703), raffle (£631), and donations (£108) was a wonderful: £8,454.

So, heartfelt thanks to Linda for steering the good ship Open Gardens to such a glorious day and everyone who played a part in making it such a wonderful event in our beautiful village of Reading Street.

